Hávamál

Hávamál (English: /ˈhɔːvəˌmɔːl/ *HAW-və-mawl*; "sayings of the high one" and possibly "sayings of the one-eyed"; 13th century Old Norse pronunciation: [ˈhɒːβaˌmɒːl], Icelandic pronunciation: [ˈhauva ˌmauɬl]) is presented as a single poem in the Codex Regius, a collection of Old Norse poems from the Viking age. The poem, itself a combination of different poems, is largely gnomic, presenting advice for living, proper conduct and wisdom. It is our most important source on Old Norse philosophy.

The verses are attributed to Odin; the implicit attribution to Odin facilitated the accretion of various mythological material also dealing with the same deity.[1]

For the most part composed in the metre *Ljóðaháttr*, a metre associated with wisdom verse, *Hávamál* is both practical and philosophical in content.[2] Following the gnomic "*Hávamál* proper" comes the *Rúnatal*, an account of how Odin won the runes, and the *Ljóðatal*, a list of magic chants or spells.[3]

"The Stranger at the Door" (1908) by W. G. Collingwood

Contents

Name

Textual history

Structure

Contents

Gestaþáttr

On women

Loddfáfnismál

Rúnatal

Ljóðatal

Germanic Neopaganism

Editions and translations

See also

References

External links

Name

The name *Hávamál* is generally taken to mean "sayings of the high one", where *háva* is the weak masculine genitive singular of *hár* "high".[4] However, it may also have been understood to mean "sayings of the one-eyed", another reference to Odin,[5] based on the reconstructed Proto-Germanic form

**haiha* "one-eyed", cognate with Gothic *haihs* "one-eyed" and Latin *caecus* "blind".[6][7] One of Odin's many names is Hárr, which may mean "hoary one" but may also represent a contraction of **Haiha-haiR* "the one-eyed hero".[8][9] Although we would not expect this word to have the weak masculine genitive singular form *háva*, Jackson Crawford suggests that it may have been influenced by the forms of *hár* as both words were homophones in the nominative singular.[4]

Textual history

The only surviving source for *Hávamál* is the 13th century Codex Regius. The part dealing with ethical conduct (the *Gestaþáttr*) was traditionally identified as the oldest portion of the poem by scholarship in the 19th and early 20th century. Bellows (1936) identifies as the core of the poem a "collection of proverbs and wise counsels" which dates to "a very early time", but which, by the nature of oral tradition, never had a fixed form or extent. Von See (1981) identifies direct influence of the *Disticha Catonis* on the *Gestaþáttr*, suggesting that also this part is a product of the high medieval period and casting doubt on the "unadulterated Germanic character" of the poem claimed by earlier commentators.[10]

To the gnomic core of the poem, other fragments and poems dealing with wisdom and proverbs accreted over time. A discussion of authorship or date for the individual parts would be futile, since almost every line or stanza could have been added, altered or removed at will at any time before the poem was written down in the 13th century. Individual verses or stanzas nevertheless certainly date to as early as the 10th, or even the 9th century. Thus, the line *deyr fé, deyja frændr* ("cattle die, kinsmen die") found in verses 76 and 77 of the *Gestaþáttr* can be shown to date to the 10th century, as it also occurs in the *Hákonarmál* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir.

Structure

The *Hávamál* is edited in 165 stanzas by Bellows (1936). Other editions give 164 stanzas, combining Bellow's stanzas 11 and 12, as the manuscript abbreviates the last two lines of stanzas 11. Some editors also combine Bellow's stanzas 163 and 164. In the following, Bellow's numeration is used.

The poems in *Hávamál* is traditionally taken to consist of at least five independent parts,

1. the *Gestaþáttr*, or *Hávamál* proper, (stanzas 1–80), a collection of proverbs and gnomic wisdom
2. a dissertation on the faithlessness of women (stanzas 81–95), prefacing an account of the love-story of Odin and the daughter of Billingr (stanzas 96–102) and the story of how Odin got the mead of poetry from the maiden Gunnlöð (stanzas 103–110)
3. the *Loddfáfnismál* (stanzas 111–138), a collection of gnomic verses similar to the *Gestaþáttr*, addressed to a certain Loddfáfnir
4. the *Rúnatal* (stanzas 139–146), an account of how Odin won the runes, introductory to the *Ljóðatal*
5. the *Ljóðatal* (stanzas 147–165), a collection of charms

Stanzas 6 and 27 are expanded beyond the standard four lines by an additional two lines of "commentary". Bellow's edition inverses the manuscript order of stanzas 39 and 40. Bellow's stanza 138 (*Ljóðalok*) is taken from the very end of the poem in the manuscript, placed before the *Rúnatal* by most editors following Müllenhoff. Stanzas 65, 73–74, 79, 111, 133–134, 163 are defective.

Stanzas 81–84 are in *málaháttr*, 85–88 in *fornyrðislag*. The entire section of 81–102 appears to be an ad hoc interpolation. Stanza 145 is also an interpolation in *málaháttr*.

Contents

Gestaþáttr

The first section ***Gestaþáttr***, the "guest's section". Stanzas 1 through 79 comprise a set of maxims for how to handle oneself when a guest and traveling, focusing particularly on manners and other behavioral relationships between hosts and guests and the sacred lore of reciprocity and hospitality to the Norse pagans.

The first stanza exemplifies the practical behavioral advice it offers:

> All the entrances, before you walk forward,
> you should look at,
> you should spy out;
> for you can't know for certain where enemies are sitting,
> ahead in the hall[3]

Number 77 is possibly the most known section of *Gestaþáttr*:

Deyr fé,	Cattle die,
deyja frændur,	friends die,
deyr sjálfur ið sama;	and the same with you;
ek veit einn at aldri deyr	but I know of something that never dies
dómr um dauðan hvern."	and that's a dead person's deeds.[11]

On women

Stanzas 83 to 110 deal with the general topic of romantic love and the character of women.

Billingr's girl watches on while Odin encounters the bitch tied to her bedpost (1895) by Lorenz Frølich.

It is introduced by a discussion of the faithlessness of women and advice for the seducing of them in stanzas 84–95, followed by two mythological accounts of Odin's interaction with women also known as "Odin's Examples" or "Odin's Love Quests". The first is an account of Odin's thwarted attempt of possessing the daughter of Billing (stanzas 96–102), followed by the story of the mead of poetry which Odin won by seducing its guardian, the maiden Gunnlöð (stanzas 103–110).

Loddfáfnismál

The ***Loddfáfnismál*** (stanzas 111–138) is again gnomic, dealing with morals, ethics, correct action and codes of conduct. The section is directed to Loddfáfnir ("stray-singer").

Rúnatal

Rúnatal or ***Óðins Rune Song***, *Rúnatáls-þáttr-Óðins* (stanzas 139–146) is a section of the *Hávamál* where Odin reveals the origins of the runes. In stanzas 139 and 140, Odin describes his sacrifice of himself to himself:

Veit ec at ec hecc vindga meiði a	I know that I hung on a windy tree
netr allar nío,	nine long nights,
geiri vndaþr oc gefinn Oðin,	wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin,
sialfr sialfom mer,	myself to myself,
a þeim meiþi, er mangi veit, hvers hann af rótom renn.	on that tree of which no man knows from where its roots run.
Við hleifi mic seldo ne viþ hornigi,	No bread did they give me nor a drink from a horn,
nysta ec niþr,	downwards I peered;
nam ec vp rvnar,	I took up the runes,
opandi nam,	screaming I took them,
fell ec aptr þaðan.	then I fell back from there.[13]

"Odin's Self-sacrifice" (1908) by W. G. Collingwood.

The younger Jelling stone (erected by Harald Bluetooth c. 970) shows the crucifixion of Christ with the victim suspended in the branches of a tree instead of on a cross.[12]

The "windy tree" from which the victim hangs is often identified with the world tree Yggdrasil by commentators. The entire scene, the sacrifice of a god to himself, the execution method by hanging the victim on a tree, and the wound inflicted on the victim by a spear, is often compared to the crucifixion of Christ as narrated in the gospels. The parallelism of Odin and Christ during the period of open co-existence of Christianity and Norse paganism in Scandinavia (the 9th to 12th centuries, corresponding with the assumed horizon of the poem's composition) is also evident from other sources. To what extent this parallelism is an incidental similarity of the mode of human sacrifice offered to Odin and the crucifixion, and to what extent a Pagan influence on Christianity, or vice versa, may have occurred, is a complex question on which scholarly opinions vary.[14]

Ljóðatal

The last section, the ***Ljóðatal*** enumerates eighteen songs (*ljóð*), sometimes called "charms", prefaced with

Ljóð ek þau kann	The songs I know
er kann-at þjóðans kona	that king's wives know not
ok mannskis mǫgr	Nor men that are sons of men.

—stanza 147

The songs themselves are not given, just their application or effect described. They are explicitly counted from "the first" in stanza 147, and "a second" to "an eighteenth" in stanzas 148 to 165, given in Roman numerals in the manuscript.[15]

There is no explicit mention of runes or runic magic in the *Ljóðatal* excepting in the twelfth song (stanza 158), which takes up the motif of Odin hanging on the tree and its association with runes,

svá ek ríst	So do I write
ok í rúnum fá'k	and color the runes

Nevertheless, because of the *Rúnatal* preceding the list, modern commentators sometimes reinterpret the *Ljóðatal* as referring to runes, specifically with the sixteen letters of the Younger Futhark.

Müllenhoff takes the original *Ljóðatal* to have ended with stanza 161, with the final three songs (16th to 18th) taken as late and obscure additions.

Germanic Neopaganism

The difference of sixteen runes of the Younger Futhark vs. eighteen charms in the *Ljóðatal* has notably motivated proponents of Germanic mysticism to expand the row by two extra runes. The best-known attempt to this effect are the Armanen runes by Guido von List (1902).

Various proponents of Germanic Neopagan groups place an emphasis on *Hávamál* as a source of a Norse pagan ethical code of conduct. The "Nine Noble Virtues", first compiled by Odinic Rite founder John "Stubba" Yeowell in the 1970s are "loosely based" on the Hávamál. The Northvegr Foundation cites the Hávamál among other Old Norse and Old English sources to illustrate "the ethical ideal of the Northern spiritual faith of Heithni."[16]

Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson, leader of the Icelandic *Ásatrúarfélagið*, published his performance of a number of Eddaic poems, including the Hávamál, chanted in rímur style.[17]

Editions and translations

- editio princeps: Peder Hansen Resen, *Edda. Islandorum an. Chr. 1215 islandice conscripta*,1665 (google books (https://books.google.com/books?id=72k_AAAAcAAJ)).
- Peter Andreas Munch, Carl Rikard Unger, *Den Ældre Edda: Samling af norrøne oldkvad, indeholdende Nordens ældste gude- og helte-sagn*, Christiania: P. T. Malling, 1847 (google books (https://books.google.com/books?id=in4EAAAAQAAJ))
- Benjamin Thorpe, *Edda Sæmundar Hinns Froða: The Edda Of Sæmund The Learned*, 1866 (online transcription (http://www.northvegr.org/the%20eddas/the%20poetic%20edda%20%20-%20thorpe%20translation/preface.html)).
- Sophus Bugge,*Sæmundar Edda*. Christiania: P. T. Malling, 1867.
- Olive Bray, *The Elder or Poetic Edda, commonly known as Sæmund's Edda, part I: The Mythological Poems*, London: Printed for the Viking Club, 1908, pp. 61–111.

- H. A. Bellows, *The Poetic Edda*, 1936, "Hovamol: The Ballad of the High One" (online edition (http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe04.htm)).
- Jackson Crawford, *The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes*, 2015 (google books (https://books.google.com/books?id=Iv73BgAAQBAJ)).

See also

- *Nine Herbs Charm*

References

1. Bellows (1936), introductory note.
2. Richardson, Nathaniel Smith; Boggs, Edward Brenton; Baum, Henry Mason (1872). *The Church Review* (https://books.google.com/books?id=Df3NAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA283&lpg=PA283&dq=havamal+reviewed&source=bl&ots=uUAdThDbNA&sig=a-EUTIfEqnRFftft1qMgfXYfwqM&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwifxc-L0vzVAhXizIMKHYmrAewQ6AEITjAI#v=onepage&q&f=false). Bassett and Bradley.
3. Larrington, Carolyne. (Trans.) (1999) *The Poetic Edda*, p. 14. Oxford World's Classics ISBN 0-19-283946-2
4. Jackson Crawford (2019-04-20), *The Title 'Hávamál' and Its Meanings (Quick Takes)* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHb1Pls3Gu8), retrieved 2019-04-21
5. Crawford, Jackson (2015). *The Poetic Edda : Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/890971661). Indianapolis: Hackett. p. 17. ISBN 9781624663567. OCLC 890971661 (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/890971661).
6. Orel, Vladimir (2003). *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology* (https://archive.org/details/Orel-AHandbookOfGermanicEtymology/page/n189). Leiden(Boston: Brill. p. 151. ISBN 9004128751.
7. de Vries, Jan (2000). *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Second revised ed.). Leiden; Boston: Brill. p. 210.
8. Kershaw, Kris (2000). *The One-Eyed God: Odin and the (Indo–) Germanic Männerbünde*. Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series 36. Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of Man. p. 5.
9. Turville-Petre, E. O. G. (1964). *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (https://archive.org/details/TurvillePetreMythAndReligionOfTheNorth/page/n35). Westport, Connectitcut: Greenwood Press. p. 62.
10. Klaus von See: „Disticha Catonis und Hávamál.“ In: Klaus von See: Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung. Heidelberg 1981, 27–44.
11. Bellows, Henry Adams (2012). *The Poetic Edda: The Heroic Poems*. Dover Publications.
12. c.f. Patton 2009:271.
13. Larrington, Carolyne. (Trans.) (1999) *The Poetic Edda*, p. 34. Oxford World's Classics ISBN 0-19-283946-2
14. a sketch of the problem is given by Kimberley Christine Patton, *Religion of the gods: ritual, paradox, and reflexivity* Oxford University, ISBN 978-0-19-509106-9, chapter 7 "Myself to Myself: The Norse Odin and Divine Autosacrifice".
15. Bellows separates the "seventeenth" item into stanzas 163 and 164. There is a gap in stanza 163, and some editors have also combined 163 and 164 into a single stanza.
16. Alfta Lothursdottir, *Trulog and Sogumal*, Northvegr (2006); Trúlög: Northern Truisms (http://www.northvegr.org/northern/book/trulog.php) (northvegr.org)

17. "Edda", Current 93 (1991); youtube.com link (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY7dtuYH7B0)

- C. V. Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, Berlin (1891).

External links

Media related to Hávamál at Wikimedia Commons

- "Havamal – Translation by Benjamin Thorpe" (https://web.archive.org/web/20080515235133/http://www.northvegr.org/lore/poetic2/006_01.php). Archived from the original (http://www.northvegr.org/lore/poetic2/006_01.php) on 2008-05-15.
- Hávamál (https://web.archive.org/web/20050912100548/http://vta.gamall-steinn.org/havamal.htm) Translation by W. H. Auden and P. B. Taylor
- Hávamál (https://web.archive.org/web/20060202014047/http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/havamal.html) Translation by Olive Bray
- Hávamál (http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/H%C3%A1vam%C3%A1l) Original text
- Parallel versions of Odin's "Rune Song" (https://wordandsilence.com/2019/03/27/the-great-myths-49-odin-sacrifices-himself-norse/) with the Bellows, Hollander, Larrington and Orchard translations
- Futhark Hávamál (https://futharkhavamal.wordpress.com/) Select stanzas rendered in Elder Futhark and English

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hávamál&oldid=933266731"

This page was last edited on 30 December 2019, at 22:40 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.